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Corporatism in the Romanian Tradition: Top-down and Bottom-up Lineages

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Abstract

The article traces the beginnings of corporatist advocacy and politics in interwar Romania to two distinct – however interrelated – paths of development: the top-down one, of ideological imports from the milieus of the rising right-wing political regimes with corporatist credentials, primarily that of fascist Italy; and the bottom-up one, leading from the grass-roots associational structures with petty entrepreneurial and white collar constituencies – themselves placed at the crossroads of the changing, and overlapping, legislative designs for the representation of professional interests – to projects of overall political reconstruction. The contextualization of Mihail Manoilescu's theory of corporatism and of the corporatist conception of professional representation itself is the larger target of the inquiry.

Keywords

corporatism; syndicalism; right-wing advocacies; professional associations; social policies

The corporatist theory exposed by Mihail Manoilescu most consistently in his *Le siècle du corporatisme* of 1934 is deemed to lack a genuine tradition behind it. International scholarship has referred to it as pertaining essentially to the intellectual context of contemporary Europe as a whole – and as mainly addressed to foreign audiences – , denying to it any national roots of significance¹ (otherwise relying heavily on it for the sake of forging the neo-corporatist theorizing meant to diagnose and advocate peculiar welfare arrangements of the post-war world²). Local fascism has itself been depicted for long as displaying only limited interferences with the corporatist ideas and politics,³ to the same extent as older and recent comparative surveys of the latter trends have always tended

1 Philippe C. Schmitter, „Reflections on Mihail Manoilescu and the Political Consequences of Delayed-Dependent Development on the Periphery of Western Europe”, in Kenneth Jowitt (ed.), *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940. A Debate on Development in a European Nation* (Berkeley: University of California, Institute of International Studies, 1978), 117-139.

2 Philippe C. Schmitter, „Still the Century of Corporatism?,” *The Review of Politics* 36 (1974): 1, 85-131; Wyn Grant (ed.), *The Political Economy of Corporatism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985).

3 Henry L. Roberts, *Rumania. Political Problems of an Agrarian State* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1969 [1951]), 231.

to disregard the milieu of the ideologist reputed for his tight articulation of protectionist economic views and corporatist political conceptions.⁴ Romanian scholarship, otherwise, has never proceeded to treat the activity of Manoilescu in the field – promoted within the folds of his journal *Lumea nouă*, founded in April 1932, and of his National Corporatist League, initiated in November 1933 – as more than one (rather marginal) incarnation of right-wing politics, failing to relate it consistently to developments in the interrelated domains of social policies and of the structures of professional representation (thus perceiving syndicalism alone as a genuine modern design for the representation of professional interests).

Staying in continuation to other interventions meant to disclose the real scope of corporatist advocacies and practices in pre-communist Romania – by relating them to their syndicalist alternatives, but also to the interplay between the politics of professional representation and the growth of social policies approached in general terms⁵ –, the present article traces the two sources of the tradition staying behind the figure of Manoilescu, with a view to clarify the meanings of their interconnections. Certainly, corporatism – of the modern style – was propagated here top-down, by the means of intellectual imports derived from the flow of political development set on the drive to right-wing radicalization in interwar Europe. It also emerged, however, from bottom up, getting first incubated within the welter of grass-roots associational movements of the professional groups and acquiring specific ideological expressions in this context, before being translated into public discourses with a wider impact. For sure, the merger of the two lineages of Romanian corporatism – identified to have taken place on the threshold of the years 1932-1933 – is no less significant than their previous separateness.

Corporatism in interwar Romania: the top-down lineage

It is precisely in 1926, at a time when the capital-labor relations started to be refashioned in Italy according to the corporatist model,⁶ that one can encounter the first testimonies of the Romanian acquaintance with the Italian developments involved. They came in the journal *Cuvântul*, and in the footsteps of previous articles advancing a favorable assessment of the political experiment underway in the sister Latin country, praising the „constructive ideology of fascism”⁷ in order to then recommend the periodical as staying „under the aegis of Rome” (by opposition to the ideological visions emanating from the democratic Paris and the communist Moscow).⁸ The fascist refashioning of syndicalism is here depicted as „conducive to a victory in the war of economic restoration”, provided that fascism itself has to be understood as a synthesis between an attitude of dedication to the welfare of the masses and a wise intimation of capitalism as a necessary endowment

4 Gaetan Pirou, *Néo-libéralisme, néo-corporatisme, néo-socialisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1939), 73-124; Matteo Pasetti (ed.), *Progetti corporativi tra le due guerre mondiali* (Roma: Carocci Editore, 2006); Antonio Costa-Pinto (ed.), *Corporatism and Fascism. The Corporatist Wave in Europe* (London: Routledge, 2017).

5 Victor Rizescu, „Social Policy and the Corporatist Design: a Romanian Experience of Reluctant Intermingling,” *Sfera politică* 24 (2016): 2, 22-30; Victor Rizescu, „De la emanciparea muncii la protecția socială: politica reprezentării profesionale în România la începutul secolului XX,” *Polis. Revistă de științe politice* 4 (2016): 4 (n. s.), 175-184.

6 L. Rosenstock-Franck, *L'économie corporative fasciste en doctrine et en fait. Ses origines historiques et son évolution* (Paris: Librairie Universitaire J. Gambler, 1934), 49-115; Gianpasquale Santomassimo, *La terza via fascista. Il mito del corporativismo* (Roma: Carocci Editore, 2006), 101-105.

7 Pamfil Șeicaru, „Ideologia constructivă a fascismului,” *Cuvântul*, June 16, 1926, 1.

8 Pamfil Șeicaru, „Fascismul Cuvântului,” *Cuvântul*, July 3, 1926, 1.

of society.⁹ The design of the corporatist state is recommended by the influential journalist Pamfil Șeicaru as a fetter against endemic corruption, on account of the fact that „the whole of the productive categories constituting the nation cannot be bribed” in the same fashion as the minority of politicians whose aggrandizement is the real meaning of democratic parliamentarianism”.¹⁰ At the beginning of the following year, Șeicaru comes back to the topic, giving a rejoinder to a criticism of corporatism formulated in the great daily newspaper *Universul* and instead advocating the design as a necessary corrective to the parliamentary state undergoing a crisis.¹¹ Soon thereafter, in February, the director of the periodical, Titus Enacovici, vindicates the corporatist state as enabling a better organization of national defense, further defining it as „emerging spontaneously from the confrontation between the view of the bourgeois state and that of the socialist one”,¹² in order to then restate his support for the idea when commenting, in April, upon the *Carta di Lavoro* of 1927 and asserting that „Mussolini places economic production on appropriate bases”, shaping his policies „in between the school of bare individualism and non-interventionism and the one of collectivism and statist interventionism”.¹³

After launching his own newspaper *Curentul* in 1928, Pamfil Șeicaru continues to underscore the transmutation of syndicalism into corporatism as staying at the center of the fascist political experiment, thus explaining in March 1929 how „fascism rests on a great social experimentation”, in so far as „the former revolutionary syndicalist Mussolini creates the conditions for a new balance of antagonistic forces in society”.¹⁴ Earlier, in May 1928, the periodical had advertised „the third congress of the fascist syndicates”, expressing the conviction that „the present century can only be dominated by the corporatist economy, in the same way as the previous one was dominated by the capitalist one”, the revolutionary change leading from an economic form to another being understood as resting on „placing capital and labor on the same footing”.¹⁵ It is to note that the two forums with a right-wing orientation were both nourished by the irradiations of the journal *Gândirea*, founded in 1921, adopting a nationalist traditionalist stance in 1924 and coming under the directorship of the traditionalist ideologist Nichifor Crainic in 1926. However, it was Crainic’s own newspaper *Calendarul* – launched in January 1932 – which antedated with several months Manoilescu’s *Lumea nouă* with a genuine sustained dedication for promoting the cause of corporatism.

From the very beginning, Crainic takes here as a matter of fact the failure of party-based politics,¹⁶ in order to then clarify that „the new form of public life” which he envisions „can only come from replacing the state of the parties with the state of the guilds”.¹⁷ The journal rejects trade unionism with a socialist slant as a perversion of genuine professional representation, teaching the workers that „only together with all the other professional organizations they will manage to obtain an effective representation of their interests, and only in such circumstances true syndicalism will prevail”.¹⁸ There is advanced a strenuous claim for refashion-

9 Ion Biciolla, „Sindicalismul fascist,” *Cuvântul* July 8, 1926, 1.

10 Pamfil Șeicaru, „Statul corporativ,” *Cuvântul*, August 4, 1926, 1.

11 Pamfil Șeicaru, „Stat corporativ?,” *Cuvântul*, January 23, 1927, 1.

12 Titus Enacovici, „Apărarea națională reclamă statul corporativ,” *Cuvântul*, February 10, 1927, 1.

13 Titus Enacovici, „Statul corporativ. ‘Charta Muncii’,” *Cuvântul*, April 29, 1927, 1.

14 Pamfil Șeicaru, „Experiența fascist,” *Curentul*, March 15, 1929, 1.

15 (unsigned) „Al treilea congres al sindicatelor fasciste. Dl. Mussolini despre sindicalismul Italian,” *Curentul*, May 10, 1928, 5.

16 Nichifor Crainic, „Falimentul partidelor,” *Calendarul*, February 9, 1932, 1.

17 Nichifor Crainic, „Spre statul breslaș,” *Calendarul*, February 25, 1932, 1.

18 Radu Dragnea, „Muncitorii și organizațiile profesionale,” *Calendarul*, February 9, 1932, 1.

ing the electoral system according to corporatist principles,¹⁹ which are themselves presented as a third option staying between liberalism and socialism.²⁰ The existing version of parliamentary state is shown to act as an instrument for draining economic resources for the sole benefit of the political class²¹ and political parties are contrasted negatively to professional bodies²² – being also depicted as „reflecting in the field of politics the atomistic tendencies of the century which brought them into being”²³ –, with the implication that „the parliament has to be the institution of the producers and of the professions, not of the political parasites”.²⁴ A part of the strategy pursued for accomplishing this goal consists in urging professional groups to stop acting as „mere annexes of the parties” and to „build their own civic consciousness, such as to become the real public opinion in the country”.²⁵

The fresh Iron Guard convert Mihail Polihroniade then delivers here elaborate series of articles dedicated first to the presentation of the Italian political system, with an emphasis upon its corporatist dimension – from August to November 1932, focusing on Italy but also pointing to the current developments in Germany and to the evolution of the Nazi party following the elections of July 31, 1932²⁶ –, and of the corporatist doctrine itself – between May and June 1933.²⁷ After disclosing the premises of the corporatist view in relation to the overall fascist program,²⁸ the exploration moves on to consider in greater depth the economic implications of the latter, showing in this connection that „the corporatist system allows for disciplining and harmonizing social life and economy under the direct control of the state”²⁹ and warning against the tendency of thinking about fascism as „non-innovative in the economic field, as a political regime based on capitalism or even as a capitalist reaction”.³⁰

One can easily contrast this with Manolescu’s original attitude – expressed in *Lumea nouă* – of prudently asserting that „the future state will have to allow for the appropriate national integration of social-economic categories”,³¹ of warning against those „superficial thinkers” subscribing to „a full identification of Italian fascism with corporatism” – due to the fact that „the only version of generalized corporatism existing in contemporary states is the fascist one” – and of arguing that „in agrarian countries like Romania, corporatism can only take peculiar forms, allowing peasant interests to assert themselves”.³² As late as 1934, in his main book on the topic, he conjoins a basic departure from liberal democracy – thus looking forward to a new type of political regime „replacing equality by justice and liberty by organization”³³ – with the determination of relegating the Italian fascist model to the inferior status of „subordinated” corporatism – on account of employing „the

19 Dragoș Protopopescu, „Cerem votul breslelor,” *Calendarul*, March 5, 1932, 1.

20 Roger F. Nicolescu, „Liberalism, socialism, corporatism,” *Calendarul*, September 14, 1932, 1.

21 Nichifor Crainic, „Lichidarea politicianismului parazitar,” *Calendarul*, March 6, 1932, 1.

22 Nichifor Crainic, „Partide și bresle,” *Calendarul*, March 14, 1932, 1.

23 Radu Dragnea, „Întregimi sociale și fracțiuni politice,” *Calendarul*, March 3, 1932, 1.

24 Radu Dragnea, „Mistificarea reprezentanței profesionale,” *Calendarul*, February 21, 1932, 1.

25 Radu Dragnea, „A doua opinie publică,” *Calendarul*, February 28, 1932, 1.

26 The series opened with Mihail Polihroniade, „Fascism,” *Calendarul*, August 25, 1932, 1-2. It was drawn to an end with Mihail Polihroniade, „Concluziuni,” *Calendarul*, November 10, 1932, 1-2.

27 Opening with Mihail Polihroniade, „Corporatism,” *Calendarul*, May 19, 1933, 1; ending with Mihail Polihroniade, „Concluzie,” *Calendarul*, June 24, 1933, 1.

28 Mihail Polihroniade, „Premisele statului corporativ,” *Calendarul*, September 18, 1932, 1-2.

29 Mihail Polihroniade, „Sindicate și corporații,” *Calendarul*, September 22, 1932, 2.

30 Mihail Polihroniade, „Economia fascistă,” *Calendarul*, September 29, 1932, 1.

31 Mihail Manolescu, „Anticipare,” *Lumea nouă*, April 1932, 2.

32 Mihail Manolescu, „Corporatism românesc,” *Lumea nouă*, June 1932, 3, 5.

33 Mihail Manolescu, *Le siècle du corporatisme: doctrine du corporatisme integral et pur* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1934), 111.

corporations as auxiliary organs, subordinated to the state"³⁴ – , by comparison to the „pure” one that he advocates (and which envisions the welter of corporations as constituting the ultimate source of public authority).

An (always unstable) fusion between the National-Corporatist League and the fascist Iron Guard on the same political platform is forged in 1936-1937, with Manoilescu paying homage in *Lumea nouă* to the fascist leaders Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu, Ion I. Moța and Vasile Marin³⁵ and contributing to the Iron Guardist periodical *Buna vestire*,³⁶ but also with members of the other trend giving corporatist pronouncements in their own journal,³⁷ as well as in the one entirely dedicated to promoting the creed.³⁸ At the level of abstract theory, this conversion is sealed by Manoilescu's appeal to the design of the single-party state – exercising a control over the corporatist structure of society – as to a necessary intermediate stage on the road to the integral and pure corporatism desired.³⁹ An evasive statement on the question is given by Codreanu in January 1938⁴⁰ – before the beginning of the Carolist persecutions against the fascist party – , later to be proudly appropriated by Manoilescu in December 1940 – under the regime of the National Legionary State – , in the journal *Chemarea vremii*.⁴¹

Corporatism in interwar Romania: the bottom-up lineage

Corporatist advocacy on the Italian model took place against the entrenched legislative framework of professional representation, as it had developed in Romania since the end of the XIXth century, in correlation with the shaping of social policies. The process involved the abolition of traditional guilds by virtue of a government decree of June 1873. Nevertheless, the state of disarray installed in the economic segment of craftsmanship and small commerce ensued soon thereafter in efforts of institutional reconstruction, predicated on the model of (quasi-)mandatory corporatist associations of a public character and taking inspiration from German, Austrian and Hungarian policies and legislation, a vision grounded first in the 1902 Law for the Organization of Professions and then in the 1912 Law for the Organization of Professions, Credit and Social Insurance.⁴² While abolishing the provisions of the latter in order to install the conception of syndical freedom – thus setting itself within the paradigm of the French law with the same content of 1884 and of the vision promoted by the International Labor Office of the League

34 Mihail Manoilescu, *Le siècle du corporatisme*, 92.

35 Mihail Manoilescu, „Cartea Căpitanului,” *Lumea nouă* 5 (1936): 10-11, 453-459; Mihail Manoilescu, „De la Lord Byron la Ion Moța,” *Lumea nouă* 6 (1937): 1, 3-5.

36 Mihail Manoilescu, „Mussolini și evreii,” *Buna vestire*, March 25, 1937, 1; Mihail Manoilescu, „O nouă constituție,” *Buna vestire*, March 30, 1937, 1, 3; Mihail Manoilescu, „Românismul partidelor și românismul corporațiilor,” *Buna vestire*, June 17, 1937, 1, 3.

37 (unsigned) „Spirit corporativ,” *Buna vestire*, March 3, 1937, 1; Petre Șt. Creștinu, „Finalități corporative,” *Buna vestire*, April 8, 1937, 2; M. Dorneanu, „Corporatismul se impune pretutindeni,” *Buna vestire*, June 24, 1937, 5.

38 Mihail Polihroniade, „Capitalism și democrație,” *Lumea nouă* 7 (1938): 1-2, 25-27.

39 Mihail Manoilescu, „Partidul unic,” *Lumea nouă* 5 (1936): 7, 319-323; Mihail Manoilescu, „Partidul unic, instituție politică a regimurilor noi,” *Lumea nouă* 5 (1936): 12, 513-517; Mihail Manoilescu, *Le parti unique. Institution politique des régimes nouveaux* (Paris : Les Œuvres Françaises, 1937).

40 (unsigned) „Un interview cu dl. Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. Omul nou. Spre corporatism. Guvernul. Minoritățile,” *Buna vestire*, January 26, 1938, 1.

41 Mihail Manoilescu, „Știința economică față de statul legionar,” part. 4, *Chemarea vremii*, December 19, 1940, 5.

42 Constantin C. Numian, *Breslele vechi și breslele noi* (Pitești: n. p., 1915).

of Nations⁴³ – the Trancu-Iași regulation for the creation of professional syndicates of 1921 established a line of policy which was certainly exposed to the pressures aiming at the politicization of syndical organizations, coming from the Left.⁴⁴ To the same extent, it was unable to curb down immediately the welter of guilds and corporations erected within the previous legislative framework. Instead, the period that followed up to 1933 witnessed the contradictory coexistence between the development of professional associations created under the new provisions and the agonic survival of the guilds and corporations established on the basis of the pre-war arrangements.

The phenomenon was partly due to the difficulties of legislative unification in the field among the provinces brought together in Greater Romania, with the Hungarian and Austrian regulations of a (semi-)corporatist nature dating from 1884, respectively 1907, continuing to stay in place in Transylvania, respectively Bukovina, and the situation in the formerly Russian province of Bessarabia constituting a void terrain that invited vacillating experimentations. Besides, in the Old Kingdom itself, the corporatist bodies continued to perform, as they had been entrusted by the law of 1912, their responsibilities in the field of professional training, also continuing to act as the basic units for the organization of social insurance (originally set as such under the supervision of a Central House of Professions, Credit and Social Insurance that was placed under the authority of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce and constituting the matrix from which the Ministry of Labor eventually emerged). Accordingly, the much delayed unification of the systems of social insurance throughout the country by a law of April 1933 – predated by the law for the establishment of the Chambers of Labor in October 1832 – meant the third successive death of the corporatist structures on Romanian soil, after the moments 1873 and 1921. (The bodies of a corporatist nature confusingly tolerated up to that moment being dismantled for good by a decision of the Ministry of Labor in July 1933, with the mission of administering professional education shifted to the Chambers of Labor and the structure of insurances reconstructed on a nation-wide base in the framework of the Ministry of Labor.) At the time, the public space was marked – as shown above – by growing advocacies in favor of the modern corporatist economic and political design. Other demands for abandoning the wisdom of syndicalism in favor of the vertically branded structures of representation were advanced, however, precisely from within the horizon of professional life described.

Indeed, no matter how confusing – and entirely neglected by the specialized surveys of the field taken in the pre-communist period as well as during the later ages⁴⁵ –, the realities of legislative and institutional contradiction depicted above went into the open with a movement giving voice to the bodies lingering since 1921. This one came to be translated into an advocacy for the official re-entrenchment of the corporatist type of professional representation with the foundation of the journal *Gazeta meseriilor*, in 1929. Led by M. Roșu and C. Arsenie, the periodical was inaugurated in January of that year with elusive calls for the „organization of labor”,⁴⁶ followed, over a period of several months, by articles on the subject

43 *La liberté syndicale*, vol 1: *Étude internationale* (Genève: Bureau International du Travail, 1927).

44 George Strat, *La liberté syndicale en Roumanie* (București: Institutul de Arte Grafice și Editură „Curierul Judiciar” S. A., 1927).

45 I. Răducanu et al., *Zece ani de politică socială în România, 1920-1930* (București: Eminescu S. A., 1930); Emilian Bold et al., *Concesii și restricții în legislația muncii din România, 1920-1940* (Iași: Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 1980); Ilie Marinescu, *Politică socială interbelică în România. Relațiile dintre muncă și capital* (București: Ed. Tehnică, 1995).

46 M. Marinescu, „Organizarea muncii,” *Gazeta meseriilor*, January 27, 1929, 4.

devoid of a clearly distinguishable orientation.⁴⁷ It only clarified sharply its stance in December, with an article that took a retrospective look at the developments after 1921, disclosing the legal and institutional inconsistency of the coexistence between „the professional organizations based on the principle of the freedom of association (syndicates or professional associations) and those based on the principle of mandatory association (guilds and corporations)”.⁴⁸ After taking several other vacillating inroads into the problem,⁴⁹ the journal announces in July 1930 the „bankruptcy of syndicalism”, maintaining that „the guild, harmonizing the interests of the employers and the workers, is to be preferred to the syndicate, that cultivates the cult of contestation”,⁵⁰ in order to then host a call for the convocation of a „congress of the guilds”⁵¹ to report about its proceedings taking place on September 28-30, 1930 and to advertise the creation of a General Confederation of the Guilds with that occasion.⁵²

Disclosing the phenomenon of the life after death enjoyed by the old corporatist institutions from 1921 to 1933 only sheds light on a segment of the legislative and institutional intricacies marking the domain of professional representation in interwar Romania. Another part of the story is constituted by the case of the General Union of the Small Entrepreneurs and Craftsmen from Greater Romania (*Uniunea Generală a Micilor Industriași și Meseriași Patroni din România Mare*), created on the basis of a special law of October 1921 (thus circumventing the provisions of the Trancu-Iași law but nevertheless evolving within the horizon created by the latter and therefore staying in opposition to the interest groups gathered around *Gazeta meseriilor*). Launched in March 1922, its periodical, entitled *Glasul micii industriei*, originally invokes the friendly collaboration with „those committees of the existing corporations which had understood the role” that the new body was expected to play,⁵³ in order to then take in May 1923 – under the signature of the president Alexandru Samoil himself – a negative stance on the outdated corporatist institutions, blamed for their obsolescence, denounced as venues of corruption and moreover shown as legally incongruent with the provisions of the law of professional syndicates (nevertheless clarifying that the conception presiding upon the foundation of the Union was meant to offer to the small industrialists precisely an alternative – of a different order – to the same general regulations for the structuring of professional life).⁵⁴ Other critical departures of the sort would follow.⁵⁵

Both the movement of the old corporations and the organization of Samoil arose from within the social and economic segment of craftsmanship and petty industry, and their vision of professional representation was certainly different from that of the worker constituencies supporting syndical activism in connection with the socialist and communist political trends. A genuine clear-cut crystallization of a corporatist discourse set in plain opposition to the politics of the Left on the issue

47 Șerban Casetti, „Introducerea asigurărilor sociale în România,” *Gazeta meseriilor*, November 11, 1929, 1, 3; M. Barasch, „Legislația muncii în România. Mișcarea legislativă de după război,” *Gazeta meseriilor*, November 18, 1929, 1.

48 (unsigned) „Corporații și bresle. Ce politică facem?,” *Gazeta meseriilor*, December 16, 1929, 1.

49 Eugen Dascălu, „Politica socială și muncitorească,” *Gazeta meseriilor*, December 30, 1929, 6; M. Marinescu, „Bresle, corporații și camera de meserii,” *Gazeta meseriilor*, April 1, 1930, 11.

50 M. Roșu, „Falimentul sindicalismului,” *Gazeta meseriilor*, July 28, 1930, 1.

51 C. Arsenie, „În preajma congresului breslelor,” *Gazeta meseriilor*, August 25, 1930, 1.

52 (unsigned) „Constituirea Confederației Generale a Breslelor. Congresul de la 28, 29 și 30 septembrie. Discursurile rostite,” *Gazeta meseriilor*, October 20, 1930, 1, 3.

53 (unsigned) „Scopul Uniunii,” *Glasul micii industriei*, March 1, 1922, 1-2.

54 Al. Samoil, „Inutilitatea corporațiilor. Ele funcționează și ilegal,” part 2, *Glasul micii industriei*, May 28, 1923, 1.

55 Al. Samoil, „Apărătorii corporațiilor. Bastonul magic al d-lui A. V. Gădei,” *Glasul micii industriei*, July 2, 1923, 1.

can only be discovered in the period, however, within the fold of a movement of the professions dominated by white collar elements: the General Confederation of Professional Associations, created in June 1930 – but tracing back its origins to 1929 –, expressing the views of organizations created on the basis of the principle of free association and benefitting in the beginning from the support of the Union of Small Entrepreneurs.⁵⁶ Led by I. D. Enescu, the president of the Society of Romanian Architects, it had as a (more longer running) offshoot the Confederation of the Associations of Intellectual Professionals, initiated in February 1933. Issued from 1930 to 1934 by the first of these two confederations, the journal *Drum nou* operated a revolutionary departure from the paradigm of corporatist theory and politics set in continuation to the traditional arrangements, its stance being predicated, indeed, on the modern conception of dissociating professional representation from horizontally branded class strife, thus demanding the demolition of parties-based parliamentarianism and its replacement with a new kind of parliamentary representation drawing on the more fundamental fact of professional affiliation. This one was intended to „redeem the fatherland from the leprosy of politics”⁵⁷ and to get „crystallized and consecrated the organic realities, liberated by all parasitism”, provided that „the nation can only obtain its definitive and complete expression through corporatism”.⁵⁸ The call was driven, moreover, by the desire of purging society of budgetary parasitism and chronic corruption and cleaning economy from suffocating political interference (highlighting to this extent that „state interventionism is not a necessity of economic life, but on the contrary, [...] is a consequence of the politicization of our entire economic structure”, having as a result „the forced labor of the great masses of the people for sustaining the political clientele”).⁵⁹

The confederation of 1930 also constituted the context from which the first political party with a corporatist program emerged: the Citizens Block for the Salvation of the Country, founded in June 1932⁶⁰ – considerably in advance of Manolescu’s National-Corporatist League –, led by the schoolteacher Grigore Forțu, intent on „taking over state power and ruling away immediately all political parties”⁶¹ – thus cleaning „the field of the heather of politics [...] such as to allow the Confederation to build the state of tomorrow on this ground”⁶² – and eventually turned to supporting a fascist discourse in conjunction with the Iron Guard (in the same fashion as Enescu was to join the National Christian Party, created in 1935). The overall right-wing politicization of the movement of professional associations came partly from its cohabitation with the newspaper *Calendarul*, with members of the two groups participating to common ventures⁶³ and with Crainic mention-

56 (unsigned) „Marea întrunire publică a Confederației Generale a Asociațiilor Profesionale,” *Glasul micii industriei*, July 15, 1930, 3-4.

57 I. D. Enescu, „Ideea corporativă,” *Drum nou*, June 21, 1932, 1. See also I. D. Enescu, „Mica industrie și încurajarea construcțiilor,” *Glasul micii industriei*, July 15, 1930, 1.

58 I. D. Enescu, *Corporatism și partidism* (București: Ed. Secției de Studii a Confederației Asociațiilor Profesionale, 1932), 30, resp. 29.

59 I. D. Enescu, „Etatism,” *Drum nou*, August 16, 1931, 1. Also I. Ghiulea, „Economia științifică împotriva economiei dirijate,” *Drum nou*, January 15, 1933, 1, 3; Ferdinand Koșca, „Naționalism economic,” *Drum nou*, July 9, 1933, 1.

60 Grigore Forțu, „Blocul Cetățenesc pentru Mântuirea Țării. Chemare,” *Drum nou*, June 15, 1932, 2.

61 (unsigned) „Lozinca momentului,” *Drum nou*, June 21, 1932, 2.

62 (unsigned) „Blocul și confederația duc acțiune comună,” *Drum nou*, July 15, 1932, 2.

63 Nichifor Crainic, „Conferințele noastre despre corporatism,” *Drum nou*, November 28, 1932, 2; the same article in *Calendarul*, November 29, 1932, 1; (unsigned) „Critica democrației. Conferința d-lui prof. Dragoș Protopopescu,” *Drum nou*, December 12, 1932, 2; (unsigned) „Reacțiunea creatoare a corporatismului. Conferința d-lui Mihail Polihroniade,” *Drum nou*, January 1, 1933, 2.

ing Enescu, in 1937, as „the first militant for the corporatist idea in Romania, acting within the movement of the free professions”.⁶⁴

Conclusions

It is at this juncture that one can certify the existence of a deep intertwining between the process of the grass-roots emergence of corporatism in Romania and that of its entrenchment by virtue of ideological imports. It is also of significance to notice how *Drum nou* depicts Manoilescu in September and November 1932 as a newcomer to the field of corporatist advocacy – whose stance is moreover suspect in so far as he is embracing the doctrine „after rejecting it as a childish one two years before”⁶⁵ and dares to „place the beginnings of corporatism in Romania just six months beforehand, at the moment of his conversion”⁶⁶ –, or else how *Calendarul* welcomes him sarcastically in February 1933 as somebody who „has got enrolled in the young Romanian corporatism movement”.⁶⁷ One can encounter Enescu defending his primacy in the field in March 1938, in the National-Christian journal *Țara noastră*, by opposition to *Lumea nouă*.⁶⁸ For sure, such a vindication of a pioneering role should have better been advanced not on his own behalf, but in the name of the entire movement of the pretty entrepreneurial and white collar professional associations carrying the legacy of the traditional guilds and of their turn-of-the-century partial reincarnations into the age of modern corporatist ideology and practice.

Before getting translated into a program of overall political reconstruction pertaining to the larger constellation of the interwar Romanian Right and staying in resonance with the contemporary European political trends of the kind, the corporatist model was articulated in the local context as a design for the representation of professional interests, participating in this capacity to the shaping of social policies, in interrelation to both the liberal and the socialist understandings of syndicalism. It is only by highlighting thus its role as an integral component of the national pedigree of the welfare state that one can disclose the full meaning of Mihail Manoilescu's theories and of their international impact.

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64 Nichifor Crainic, *Programul statului etnocratic* (București: Tipografia Ziarului Universul, [1937]), 7.

65 (unsigned) „Manifestări corporatiste,” *Drum nou*, September 1, 1932, 2.

66 (unsigned) „Un succes,” *Drum nou*, November 1, 1932, 3.

67 Mihail Polihroniade, „România, stat corporativ de Mihail Manoilescu,” *Calendarul*, February 23, 1933, 1, commenting upon Mihail Manoilescu, *România, stat corporativ: de ce și cum trebuie transformat statul nostru* (București: Tipografia Modernă, 1933).

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